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CLOCK

Blowing
the ticking
of my alarm clock
is not very loud
yet I just heard it
stop

and I got up
and wound it
till it was tight
once again

that is how quiet
the night is

W. Robert Arnold

THE SURVEY

By Alex Merachny

CHARACTERS

SPEERS - 25, light hair, average height, thin. Wearing suit and raincoat. Carries briefcase.

CLARKSON - 43, balding. Dressed in comfortable at home clothes.

SCENE

Clarkson's living room. Furniture old and comfortable. Center stage rear sofa. In front of it is a coffee table and to the right and left of it are armchairs.

CLARKSON is sitting reading the paper in chair stage left. Doorbell rings. Opens door.

SPEERS: Hello, my name is Peter Speers. I am doing a survey for the advertising firm of Howe and Broadly. I wonder if you would mind answering a few questions?

CLARKSON: Well, I don't....

SPEERS: We are paying two dollars to compensate for the time and trouble I cause you.

CLARKSON: Ah, why not. Come on in.

SPEERS: Thank you sir. (*SPEERS opens briefcase with back to CLARKSON so he can not see in. Takes out a form and a pen.)* Now then sir, are you married?

CLARKSON: No.

SPEERS: Divorced?

CLARKSON: Yes.

SPEERS: How old are you sir? To the nearest five years.

CLARKSON: Forty.

SPEERS: Forty. And you earn five to ten thousand, ten to fifteen thousand a year?

CLARKSON: Nine.

SPEERS: Catagory A. Now then, do you feel that there is too much crime in the streets?

CLARKSON: I sure do.

SPEERS: Have you ever been a victim of a crime such as a robbery?

CLARKSON: No.

SPEERS: Assault?

CLARKSON: No.

SPEERS: Mugging, rape or attempted murder?

CLARKSON: Raped? No, no none of those. Say you're not selling burglar alarms or something like that are you? Cause if you...

SPEERS: Oh no sir, of course not. Now then sir, have you ever been arrested?

CLARKSON: Well, yes. Once. Does my name get used in this?

SPEERS: No, definitely not sir. Everything is strictly confidential.

CLARKSON: O.K. then, I got picked up for being drunk when I was about twenty-three or four.

SPEERS: But no criminal offences of a serious nature?

CLARKSON: No.

SPEERS: I see. Tell me sir, do you think the laws are strict enough or should they be made more leniant?

CLARKSON: I think they should be more strict. You read in the papers everyday that there are criminals running around free cause they got some fancy lawyer to get them off, and the police are always saying that criminals are pampered.

SPEERS: You are for stricter laws then?

CLARKSON: Sure. We should go back to the way Eliot Ness used to do it. No arguing or courts or reading rights. Just shoot'em down in the streets.

SPEERS: You want the police to have more power?

CLARKSON: Yes, I do.

SPEERS: Well how do you feel about police brutality and wire-tapping?

CLARKSON: I think that they have to their job anyway they can.

SPEERS: I see. In what order would you place these types of criminals as being dangerous to society? Murderers, hold-up men and drug pushers.

CLARKSON: Drug pushers first then murderers and hold-up men last.

SPEERS: Why pushers first?

CLARKSON: Cause they're ruining our country. They should all be shot.

SPEERS: Now then sir, if you'll just sign this form. *(hands him another form)* It says that we can use your answers in our survey, but not your name. That you have received the two dollars *(gives him the money)* and that you will make no legal claims against Howe and Broadly or their employees as a result of this experiment. *(CLARKSON signs and hands form back)* Now then sir.

(SPEERS takes gun out of the briefcase and shoots CLARKSON.)

SPEERS: Sir, you have just been the victim of a crime. What is your immediate reaction? *(CLARKSON stares at him horrified)* Hmmm I'll just put down shocked.

CLARKSON: *(coming to his senses, stands up, angry)* Why of all the God-damned, stupid things... *(clutches his chest and falls on the floor)*

SPEERS: Secondary reaction, hostility towards criminal. Thank you sir. *(closes briefcase)* Sir? Sir? *(pokes CLARKSON with his foot)* Hmmm. *(exit)*

SEA WORDS

By Eric Garsonnin

Waves crash into land,
Rolling out dull booms,
That echo
Leaving but a faint memory
Of having heard it all before.
Somewhere.

Water rushes back
Through fissures
Whispering
Of love and good times gone,
Somewhere.

The sea speaks.
In old ways long forgotten
Someday I will know
As I hit the land and boom,
As I return, whispering.

BIRD OF PARADISE

By Carol Reid

CHARACTERS:

ROSIE - about 40, overweight. Wears a loose, maroon colored dress.

SARA - in her late twenties Wears an old wedding dress which has been altered to fit her. Both women wear heavy makeup.

HAL - about 50. Slick hair and moustache, both reminiscent of black shoe polish. Rolled up sleeves, and a tight vest.

SETTING: Two faded high-backed chairs, a phonograph between them. A greasy window behind them. Old scratchy jazz playing on the phonograph. HAL leans against the window. ROSIE and SARA are doing a two women chorus line, laughing and holding on to each other. The number ends.

ROSIE: Hold on, hold on, here comes my favorite.

SARA: Yeah, come on, do it.

ROSIE: Just a minute. I've got to be black for this one. *(She tries to feel black. Too late. Bessie Smith beats her to the song.)* Oh well.

SARA: How about me then?

ROSIE: Yeah? *(She stands back, waits for SARA to get into it.)*

SARA: No. I guess not. Hey do you have a dollar? I want to go for a drink, you know, and if a girl's got no money then the guy says, 'Can I buy a drink,' then you have to...you know. The same old story.

ROSIE: Yeah. Don't have an extra dollar though. Hey, you know the words to this, don't you?

SARA: I'm not black, Rosie.

ROSIE: Right. A free spirit. *(She sits down, looking at SARA)* You don't know the words. *(Short pause).*

SARA: I can remember every bit of it. *(HAL comes forward.)* When I sang on Sundays, I knew all the words then. Couldn't bring me down those days.

HAL: We've got to do something about that girl.

ROSIE: She does o.k. *(SARA nods)*

HAL: Well, it don't suit me. Don't seem like anything around here's got much to do with me. *(pause)* Cheap no-goods. I tell you.

ROSIE: Right.

SARA: Listen, Rosie. I don't really know that's happening. I can't remember...

ROSIE: No? *(SARA shrugs her shoulders. HAL returns to the window.)*

SARA: Bet there's a lot of people in there, right?

ROSIE: Yeah.

SARA: Not for you this time.

ROSIE: I've had better than that, you know.

SARA: Yes, there's been better. *(Things are becoming depressing. SARA decides it's time for one of her favorite games.)* Hey, guess what I'm thinking. *(ROSIE knows the game.)*

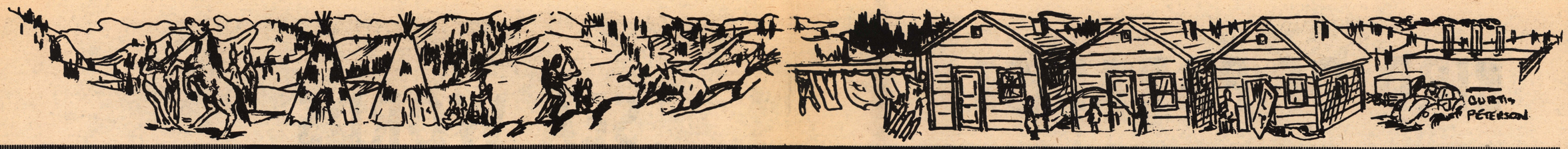
ROSIE: Don't know. *(short pause)* That yellow...

SARA: Yeah, my yellow silk dress. Remember that dress? Used to just flow around...not as good as this one though. *(Stands up, swirls around.)* This one you can spread right out.

ROSIE: Nice. *(Pause. A screechy trumpet solo comes from the record palyer. ROSIE winces.)* Oh Jesus!

SARA: *(Speaking to ROSIE but looking away from her.)* The annunciation, maybe. Did you know I used to be catholic? Yeah, you probably did. The angels come down to the Virgin Mary and they say, 'bad news baby.' *(SARA laughs at her own little joke.)* Something like that. I think. *(turns to ROSIE)* Don't get me wrong though. I always liked old Virgin Mary. Prettiest girl I've ever seen, just about. *(Pause. SARA is trying to make a point.)* I really do like Virgin Mary. I used to think she was a drag but...*(ROSIE cackles)* Allright.

ROSIE: Well, well, not much happening with you, eh? I tell you one of these days I'm going to pack up and fly right down to Puerto Rico. I don't have to stay, you know. Nobody says I have to stay. Got a lot of life left yet.



THE OLD BLIND MAN OF NITINAT: 1862

By Jak English

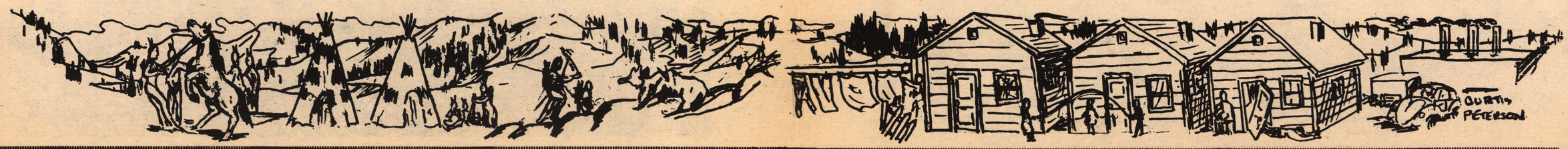
Silence continue...
frogs croak,
rotting villages: Clayoquot,
Yuquot, Ahousat, Nitinat,
revive the tribal memory
of Raven
of Wolf.

In my aging mind
song is sea
under sea
great salmon
great dogfish
will eat the world
when sun
goes dark.

Spirit-song
is clamshell
carved on the totem
of my clan.
My eyes are sealed with flesh.
The cedar-split-logs
from village
to my lone hut
are hard for an old man
to travel,
and my cane has been broken
by the children of the village.

Who sees the Raven now?
They call me sorcerer
when I speak of him
--laugh, then run.
All: Scared children.
Long time ago, I walked tall
through these forests,
swam these cold rivers alone
or with good friends who knew me;
climbed mountains and went down the rivers,
climbed with my spirits beside me,
through these woods,
to find straight cedar
for my canoes.

I fished this coast;
even went whaling
when my father died.
Yes, there was much time
then, and many things to see
and to build
and pray for.
Now, I hear sounds
of strange beings
--the metal ones
--and my spirits must hide
from this noise
and the strange voices
that have come, uninvited.
Now my people are dying;
fever and hunger in the villages.
They leave by the boatloads.
Soon, I think all will be gone.
My people,
leaving land and sea.
But, where do we go?



SARA: *(whispering)* I think I'm...*(pause)* Forget it. I'm going to forget it. *(out loud)* It's going to be so beautiful. *(Whispering again)* And if you don't let me I'll screw every man on the street between now and Sunday, and everybody will know and you won't find nobody to marry me.

ROSIE: *(Sighing)* Right.

SARA: I don't know. I just like saying it. *(whispers)* I just like screaming it. *(ROSIE looks at her slightly bored, SARA stands up slowly, defiantly, tears her dress almost to her knee, accompanied by the screeching trumpet.)*

ROSIE: That's what you want, right? *(Silence. SARA sits down.)*

SARA: I got so lonely sometimes and he said if we...did it... he would stay the whole night...and he did, he stayed all night. Even came back two or three times and I thought, by God the guy's in love with me.

ROSIE: Yeah, well, that's nothing. Tom used to bring me a rose every time and he'd put it right there. *(points to the neckline of her blouse.)* and say, 'a rose for a rose, my dear,' and I'd say, 'Jesus Christ, Tom, there's still thorns in that rose,' and he'd laugh. *(ROSIE laughs, SARA covers her face with her hands, then looks up at ROSIE.)*

SARA: He was different, not like those hot boys with their panting and begging...*(ROSIE cackles. Pause.)*

ROSIE: *Bit of a rip in that dress, eh? (SARA nods.)* I thougt this was going to be a good time. *(SARA nods again.)* Listen, don't you forget all those nice girls in there waiting for you. They think this is fun. And so it is. *(pause)* This is a dream, an absolute.

SARA: Remember my yellow silk dress? Every summer I wore that dress. *(Stands up inspecting the rip in her dress.)* This one was too tight, Rosie. *(ROSIE shrugs her shoulders. HAL advances from his place by the window. He looks at SARA)*

HAL: We've got to do something about this mess, Rosie. *(ROSIE agrees. SARA slumps in her chair, her hands over her eyes. HAL gets a shaving mug and brush from the window sill, and takes a straight razor from his pocket. He lifts SARA's dress to her knees, lathers her legs and begins shaving them ROSIE kneels at her other side and sews the tear in her dress. SARA's speech goes on as HAL and ROSIE are working around her. SARA looks at the ceiling.)*

SARA: I can remember every bit of it. I'm sitting in a dark crowded theatre, and the movie is a really dirty one. So I get this urge to take my clothes off, you know. Nobody will care, I thought, so right in my seat there, I take off all my clothes. And I'm sitting there and this man next to me...did this really happen, Rosie? It was so dark I couldn't even see his face...he starts touching me, so I tell him to leave me alone, but he doesn't and I'm trying to get my clothes on and keep his hands off me. Oh Jesus, and it's so crowded I can't get out of my seat. So I start screaming, 'this guy is trying to rape me,' but they all just keep watching the movie, except you. Did this really happen, Rosie? You stand at the end of the aisle and you say...

ROSIE: Come on, come on. *(to HAL)* This is better, eh? Nothing to worry about after all. *(HAL nods, pats her on the back.)*

SARA: ...Get your hands off that girl, you bastard. And the guy does, so I put my clothes back on and the movie's over. *(She speaks more slowly now.)* Then I walk through the lobby and I see the guy sitting there. I see his face, and it's one of those soft, thick-lipped, seventeen year old faces. It made me so sick. I went and slapped him until my hand couldn't feel that soft, messy face anymore. *(SARA looks down at the mess of thread and shaving cream at her feet. HAL stands next to SARA's chair. ROSIE sits in her chair again. The song now playing is recognizable as Lover Come Back To Me.)* Hey, listen, you won't do that again will you ? *(Short pause)*

ROSIE: *(Sighing)* This isn't so bad. She looks okay.

HAL: Can't tell anything in this light. *(to SARA)* There's got to be some changes made. *(SARA looks away from him. ROSIE seems disillusioned.)*

ROSIE: *(As if she knows what she is saying is ridiculous.)* This is a dream. *(Pause. SARA looks up at HAL.)*

SARA: The girls in the back room are waiting. Is it all happening here? Is it?

HAL: I say there's got to be some changes.

SARA: Allright. Let's go dancing. *(ROSIE and HAL shake their heads.)* We can all go. *(SARA is tired. She walks back to the greasy window.)* Wasn't so long ago that I used to go to the old ballroom in the summer. *(She draws hearts in the grease...SARA?)* Old Tom used to take me, everybody used to dance. *(Pause)* Jesus, remember those drinks they gave us? Cooled you off at first, but...whew! We could have flown off to the sun those nights. *(Turns to HAL and ROSIE* with a look of mixed recognition and surprise.) And there you are again... and the girls...

HAL:: Never cared much for the old ballroom.

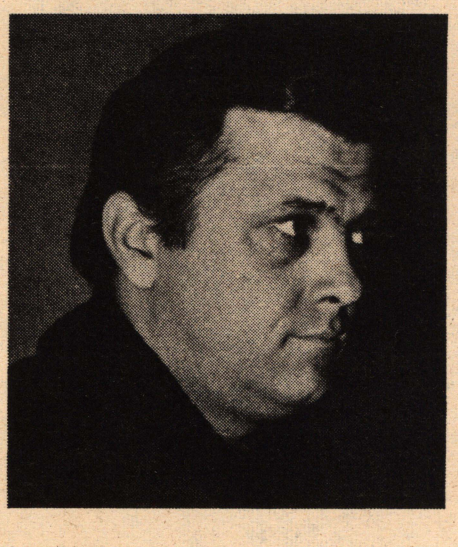
ROSIE: One dance and my mascara ran.

SARA: Remember that girl in the yellow silk dress? Used to just prance around.

CURTAIN

Thanksgiving in a Pub

By W. Robert Arnold



there aren't many here
tonight
and most of us
are likely bachelors
whose homes are all
too far away

and a few of us
I suppose
are here escaping
from a home that is
all too near

then there is the old one
over in the corner
whose only home is here

A ROOMING HOUSE

I moved in yesterday-

expecting changes,

of scenery

of fortune

of living

and of loving-

I moved in yesterday-

and I was right,

different excitement

scenery

fortune

living

and loving-

and

different

heartbreak

By John E. O'Neill